

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL ESTIMATES BOARD

2 July 1951

SUBJECT: SE-8: POSSIBLE COMMUNIST OBJECTIVES IN SUGGESTING
A CEASE FIRE IN KOREA

THE PROBLEM

To examine possible Soviet objectives in proposing a
cease fire and armistice in Korea.

ESTIMATE

THE COMMUNIST CEASE FIRE PROPOSAL

1. On 23 June, Soviet UN Chief Delegate Malik, speaking on a UN program series, presented a vague suggestion that the "belligerents" should start discussions for a "cease fire and armistice" in Korea. On 27 June Malik's statement was clarified to some extent by Soviet Acting Foreign Minister Gromyko, who stated to US Ambassador Kirk that the representatives of parties fighting in Korea ("representatives of the Unified Command plus

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South Korean Command and of the North Korean's People's Republic Command plus representatives of the Chinese Volunteer Units") should meet and conclude a military armistice, to include a cease-fire. Such an armistice, Gromyko said, would be limited to strictly military issues and would not involve political or territorial matters. Gromyko also said that assurances against resumption of hostilities should be discussed between the military representatives formulating the terms of the military armistice.

2. Peiping's only reaction to the Malik speech was contained in an editorial in the semi-official Peiping People's Daily. The editorial endorsed Malik's proposal, but failed to clarify Peiping's attitude on the cease-fire. The only other significant Communist development in connection with the cease-fire suggestion was a reported North Korean broadcast on 27 June in which the Communist propaganda line calling on the People's Army to drive the enemy into the sea was changed to driving "the enemy within the 38th Parallel."

CURRENT SITUATION IN NORTH KOREA AND MANCHURIA

3. Communist forces in Korea have suffered more than a million casualties in the face of a substantial increase in the

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effectiveness of UN forces. North Korean losses have strained the limits of available North Korean manpower and North Korean forces are now capable of only limited offensive actions. The Chinese Communists can replace their heavy casualties and can continue large scale military operations in Korea if they receive assistance from the Soviet Union in replacing equipment losses. Unless, however, the Chinese Communists develop and employ substantial numbers of heavily equipped troops with strong air support, they not only will continue to be unsuccessful in attempts to defeat UN forces, but may well eventually be driven from North Korea.

4. Communist Air Forces in the Korean-Manchurian area have been steadily expanded, and combat effectiveness has been greatly increased by the addition of over 400 jet aircraft supplied by the USSR. With a total of approximately 1,000 aircraft available, the Chinese Communists now possess a far greater air capability than they had last November and may, within a few months, be capable of contesting UN air superiority in North Korea. There are fairly reliable indications that some tanks and heavy equipment are being supplied and that some training in their use is going on in Manchuria. There is also a possibility that the

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USSR has agreed to train and equip at least 30 Chinese Communist divisions. It is doubtful if they will soon have available sufficient Chinese troops in Manchuria trained and equipped with heavy weapons to offset the present heavy advantage of UN forces in firepower. Even should the essential heavy equipment be available in Manchuria, however, Communist logistic difficulties would continue to prevent the movement of the necessary amounts of material and manpower to the Korean front to permit Communist forces to sustain large-scale offensives unless the Communists have been able to achieve air superiority.

5. There is some evidence of limited Soviet participation in the Korean war, beyond the known provision of aircraft, radar, antiaircraft equipment and technical personnel. Soviet pilots may have flown jet aircraft in combat and fairly reliable reports state that Soviet crews are manning antiaircraft equipment in North Korea. There are also unconfirmed reports of Soviet combat troops in many locations throughout Manchuria, including towns near the Korean border, but the available evidence does not give clear indication of a significant increase of Soviet participation in the near future.

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6. Recent POW reports indicate growing friction between Chinese and North Koreans and a bad - possibly critical - food situation in North Korea. The reports also indicate that Communist morale in Korea has been good except among troops exposed to several days of combat under very severe conditions.

POSSIBLE SOVIET OBJECTIVES IN PROPOSING CEASE-FIRE

7. On the basis of present evidence, it is impossible to determine the Kremlin's objectives in proposing a cease-fire in Korea or to predict with any assurance what course of action the Communists are likely to pursue. It is possible that the Kremlin's plans remain flexible. The Communists may intend to begin cease-fire discussions to discover how much freedom of action they could retain under cease-fire terms, or they may intend to conclude a cease-fire agreement and then enter into a discussion of military, territorial, and political issues while simultaneously building up Communist military strength in North Korea or in Manchuria. The Communists could in this way avoid a final commitment to any particular course of action until they have had an opportunity to study the political and military reactions of the West to the situation as it develops.

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8. Discussion of Cease-Fire without a Firm Intention of Bringing Negotiations to a Conclusion. The Kremlin may have made its cease-fire proposal with no firm intention of carrying through the negotiations to the conclusion of a cease-fire.

a. Argument for this course of action:

(i) The Politburo may have reasoned that the mere announcement of a Soviet "desire" to bring about a cease-fire would be a potent propaganda weapon in the Soviet "peace" campaign, and that a subsequent accusation, however, fraudulent, that the UN refused "to cooperate in a peaceful settlement" could be exploited in further support of that campaign.

(ii) The Kremlin may also have estimated that the mere suggestion of a cease-fire would bring to the fore divergent views on the conditions for a Korean settlement, with divisive effects within and among the UN countries (a great divergence of views is already evident between the Republic of Korea and its UN allies).

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(iii) In view of the considerable Communist build-up in the Far East, the Kremlin may intend to engineer a breakdown of armistice discussions in order to "justify" increased Soviet support to the Chinese Communists and North Koreans and possibly the commitment of Soviet forces in combat.

b. Argument against this course of action:

- (i) Although the Kremlin will undoubtedly press vigorously the propaganda advantages of its proposal and will be quick to exploit any division which might appear among the UN allies, these advantages would be merely temporary if the Communists in fact broke off the discussions.
- (ii) Similarly, if the Communists took the initiative in breaking off the discussions, they would gain little in their efforts to exploit the Soviet cease-fire proposal to "justify" a subsequent increase in Soviet support of the Chinese Communists and North Koreans.

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c. Probability of this course of action:

The initiation of cease-fire negotiations without the intent to complete such negotiations would offer temporary advantages insufficient in themselves to justify this course of action. Furthermore, we do not believe that the Soviet Union desires to run the risk of war inherent in the Soviet provision of essential air support and heavy weapons. For these reasons we believe it unlikely that the Communists will undertake this course of action.

9. Conclusion of a Cease-Fire of Limited Duration with Intent to Resume Hostilities. The Soviet cease-fire proposal may have been intended to result in the conclusion of a cease-fire and armistice of limited duration.

a. Argument for this course of action:

- (1) If a cease-fire were concluded, the propaganda and political advantages cited in paragraph 8 a above would be greatly increased.

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- (ii) This respite would give the Communists time in which they might improve their logistic and tactical situation both within Korea itself and in areas beyond the cognizance of UN inspection teams (e.g., Manchuria).
- (iii) A cease-fire could serve to interrupt successful UN military action in Korea at a point where important Communist military positions are about to be overrun, and during a season of the year particularly favorable to the use of mechanized ground equipment and naval and air power.

b. Argument against this course of action:

- (i) In view of the inspection arrangements that would almost certainly be included in a cease-fire agreement, the Communists will have difficulty in building up, without detection sufficient military strength in North Korea to change the military balance of power materially.

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- (ii) The resumption of hostilities after an armistice would compound the risks of war with the US which we have estimated the USSR wishes to avoid at this time.

c. Probability of this course of action:

In view of the fact that this course provides only temporary and limited advantages and increases the risk of general war, we do not believe the Soviet Union would pursue this course of action.

10. Conclusion and Indefinite Prolongation of an Armistice without a Firm Intent to Reach a Final Settlement of the Korean Conflict. A possible Communist course of action would be to meet the UN demands for an armistice, but to prolong the armistice indefinitely by conducting protracted negotiations for a final military, territorial, and political settlement of the Korean conflict without a firm intention of making important concessions which would permit such a settlement.

a. Argument for such a course of action:

- (i) A prolonged armistice would, in effect, restore the status quo ante bellum in

Korea. In the light of the heavy cost of the Korean war thus far, the Communists might well feel that de facto control over the area north of the 38th Parallel represented the most favorable terms on which the Korean war could be brought to a close.

- (ii) It would enable the Chinese Communists to maintain their original political demands (a seat in the UN, control over Formosa, etc.) and so avoid the consequent loss of face which such a retreat would entail.
- (iii) It would tie up substantial UN forces in Korea for an indefinite period.
- (iv) It might subject UN troops in the field to a debilitating and demoralizing period of inaction and create official and popular pressures on the part of the UN belligerents to withdraw their forces from Korea.

- (v) It might slow down the rate of mobilization and rearmament of the free world.
- (vi) It would give the Communists time to increase the combat effectiveness of forces in training, including such elite forces as may be training with modern Soviet weapons in Manchuria.
- (vii) It would provide the Chinese Communists with an extended respite which they could use to further consolidate their control within China.
- (viii) It would give the Peiping regime time to strengthen its east coast defenses against possible Nationalist assaults, and/or permit Peiping to build up strength in South China for possible action against Southeast Asia or Hong Kong and in East China for a possible invasion of Taiwan.
- (ix) It might also provide the USSR with greater freedom of action to exert pressure on vulnerable areas elsewhere.

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b. Argument against this course of action:

- (i) The abandonment of the Communist objective of driving UN forces from Korea might have an adverse effect on the morale of Communist forces in Korea and might also aggravate existing frictions between the Chinese and the North Koreans.
- (ii) It might bring to the fore problems of control over North Korea and possibly Manchuria and might eventually strain Sino-Soviet relations.
- (iii) An indefinite abandonment of maximum Communist objectives in Korea would involve severe loss of Communist prestige.
- (iv) It would vindicate Western policy of resisting aggression.

c. Probability of this course of action:

We believe this course of action is the one that the Communists are most likely to follow. By agreeing to an armistice and prolonging indefinitely the discussions of a final settlement,

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the Communists might well obtain for an indefinite period effective control of North Korea without making political, military, and territorial concessions and without the loss of as much international prestige as would be involved in a final settlement.

11. Conclusion of an Armistice with a Firm Intention of Concluding a Settlement in Korea. A fourth possible course of action for the Communists would be to agree to UN armistice terms as a first step toward the achievement of a final military, territorial, and political settlement of the Korean conflict.

a. Argument for this course of action:

- (1) A final settlement of the Korean conflict would permit the Communists to close out what they may consider a costly and unrewarding incident. It is conceivable that both the USSR and Communist China are so anxious to avoid global war at this time that they would be willing to accept a serious local setback in order to preserve and build up their strength.

- (ii) It would permit the Chinese Communists to proceed with the consolidation of China, to strengthen and redeploy their forces for possible military operations such as Southeast Asia or Taiwan.
- (iii) It would result in the withdrawal of UN forces from Korea and would remove what the Communists have declared a threat to the security of Manchuria and the Soviet Union.
- (iv) The withdrawal of UN troops that would follow final settlement of the Korean conflict would permit the Chinese Communists to pursue by political and subversive means in Korea what they failed to achieve by military methods.
- (v) The USSR might estimate that final settlement of the Korean war would slow the rate of Western rearmament and mobilization by removing the sense of urgency which the hostilities in Korea have created.

b. Argument against this course of action:

- (i) The UN terms for a final settlement in Korea will probably include provisions for eventual unification of Korea under a popularly elected government. The Communists would probably regard such a solution as contrary to their interests in this area.
- (ii) For the foreseeable future, it is probable that in a reunited Korea, the non-Communist elements would be able to outweigh the influence of the reduced and greatly disorganized Korean Communist elements, barring strong support from the Chinese Communists or the USSR which would presumably be precluded by the terms of the final settlement.
- (iii) A final settlement in Korea on UN terms would be a tremendous propaganda victory for the West and would destroy the myth that Communism is an irresistible force. This would entail a loss in the prestige of both Communist China and the USSR throughout the world and particularly in

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c. Probability of this course of action:

Unless the USSR and Communist China are so anxious to liquidate the Korean conflict that they would do so at almost any price, it is almost certain that they will not adopt this course of action. We believe that the USSR and Communist China are not under sufficient compulsion to liquidate the Korean conflict to make a final settlement on UN terms.

CONCLUSIONS

12. In view of the foregoing analysis, we believe that the Communists have probably decided to forego their maximum objective in Korea (the expulsion of UN forces). The Kremlin will, undoubtedly, attempt to gain maximum political and psychological advantage from a Communist-initiated armistice in Korea, and will attempt to minimize the loss of prestige involved in their abandonment of their maximum objective in Korea. We believe the most probable objective of the Kremlin is to conclude an indefinitely prolonged armistice which would, in effect, result in a return to the status quo ante bellum. If, in the

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cease-fire and armistice discussions, the Communists decide that they cannot obtain an armistice which would, in effect, result in a return to the status quo ante bellum, we believe they would protract the negotiations long enough to build up their capabilities for the resumption of hostilities, possibly with increased Soviet support.